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Christmas pudding ready for Grand Old Christmas Festival



MARYANNE FIKTUS/

QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Volunteers Janet Jackson, Cathy Rubocki and Rose Archer prepare Christmas pudding that will be sold at Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum's 38th annual Grand Old Christmas Festival Dec. 7. See story on page 2.

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FRONT

MUSEUM

Time for Port's favourite holiday treat

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Behind the walls of Abelara's Tea Room lies a closely-guarded secret.

It's a recipe known only by a tight-kipped group of volunteers, who for the past three decades have used it to create one of Port Colborne's favourite holiday treats.

On Dec. 7, families will line up, as they do every year, to indulge in Christmas pudding and carry out what has become a local tradition.

The savoury dish, served up with homemade butter-scotch sauce, is sold by volunteers at Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum's annual Grand Old Christmas Festival.

And boy, does it go fast. Though 400 packages of the festive treat are made, they're often gone in a flash, museum director and curator Stephanie Powell Baswick said.

anie Powell Baswick said.

A limit of two per customer had to be imposed after a recent year when the Christmas pudding sold out in a mere 20 minutes.

"Every year we do sell out," she said, though volunteers try to distribute it as fairly as possible.

People unwilling to chance missing out on the annual delight often wait at the tea room doors prior to the festival's noon start, she added.

"The pudding really is the thing people don't want to miss out on."

Each package of pudding serves six to eight people and costs \$7. Butter-scotch sauce is available for an additional \$2.

Those unable to get their hands on the dessert Dec. 7 can stop by Abelara's Dec. 8 to 13 for a special serving of tea and pudding, or sugar cookies for those who prefer, for \$5.

Funds raised by the pudding sales support the tea room, which in turn helps support operation of the museum.

It takes a team of about 25 volunteers to whip up enough of the holiday favourite to satisfy crowds.

Having worked together for many years, they've got their assembly line down to a fine art.

After the mixture of ingredients, including spices, fruit, nuts, potatoes, carrots and suet (beef fat), is created, it must be divided evenly into cans.

It's a task Lyda Sebastiany has done so many times, she doesn't need a scale to know just the right amount.

"You get a good feel for it," she said while picking up a can and sending it back for just a bit more.

The cans filled with the mixture are then steamed for three hours, a process that turns it into a dessert that some consider similar to fruit cake.

"It's not something people usually make at home," Powell Baswick said, as it's "labour intensive, there are a lot of ingredients and it's time consuming."

The dessert is also "hard to find anywhere else," she said, which also adds to the allure of purchasing it at the tea room.

While making Christmas pudding is a lot of work, the volunteers enjoy the tradition of coming together to prepare the dessert, convenor Bonnie Johnston said.

"It's about the camaraderie," she said with a smile, while breaking up momentarily from her role in the assembly line.



Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum director and curator Stephanie Powell Baswick holds one of many items on display in the museum's new exhibit, The Wish List. The exhibit, featured at the Grand Old Christmas Festival Dec. 7, takes a look back through time at items people may have made or bought for their loved ones for the holidays.

Johnston has been helping with the secret recipe since it was first introduced at the tea room and the first batch of pudding made about 30 years ago.

She urged those who haven't tried the "unusual but delicious dessert" to attend the Grand Old Christmas Festival Dec. 7 and treat their tastebuds.

The 38th annual festival is held on the museum grounds, 280 King St., from noon to

4 p.m. and includes a craft sale, wreath making, candle dipping and a performance by the McKay Public School choir.

Along with the famous Christmas pudding, seasonal treats will be available including apple cider, caramel apples and roasted chestnuts.

"We have everything you'll find in a Christmas song," Powell Baswick said.

"An open fire, carriage rides and, of course, Santa Claus

will be there."

Festival participants will also have the chance to see the museum's new exhibit, The Wish List, which takes a look back through time at items people may have made or bought for their loved ones for the holidays.

There is no cost to attend the festival, though donations are welcomed.

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PHOTOS BY MARYANNE FIRTH/QMI AGENCY NAGRA

Volunteer Cathy Rubocki prepares Christmas pudding that will be sold at Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum's 38th annual Grand Old Christmas Festival Dec. 7.

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LOCAL NEWS

RALLY

Thousands demand end to hospital cuts

ALLAN DENNER

QM Agency Niagara

Roger Montpetit is normally a relatively quiet 11-year-old — but last Friday afternoon, on the steps of Queen's Park in Toronto, he felt like a celebrity.

Thousands of people, most of whom he did not know, shouted his name in unison: "Roger! Roger! Roger!"

Despite nervous jitters, the Grade 7 student at Welland's Plymouth Public School stepped up to the podium joining medical professionals, labour leaders and political representatives speaking at a rally organized by the Ontario Health Coalition to demand that the provincial government preserve hospital services across the province.

The planned closure of the Welland hospital brought Roger, his mother, Mary, and dozens of other Welland area residents to the provincial legislature, riding a bus to Toronto to participate along with more than 3,000 others from across the province in other communities where hospital services are being threatened with cutbacks and closures.

"I'm here to fight to keep our hospital open," Roger told the cheering crowd.

"We need our hospital because of the seniors and the very ill. Sometimes in an emergency it becomes a life and death situation. What makes them think a new hospital will be better?" he said, referring to plans in Niagara to close five hospitals and replace them with a single new facility to be constructed in Niagara Falls.



ALLAN DENNER / STAFF PHOTO
Roger Montpetit and his mother Mary speaking at a health care rally at Queen's Park, Friday.

He said the politicians and health-care decision-makers might think differently if they were placed in the same position as the people their decisions affect.

"We should have them in our community. Take away their big salary, take away their cars and let them try to get to the new hospital," he

said. "I'm 11 years old and I know this is wrong. They should know that, too." As the crowd cheered following his speech, Fiona McMurran from the south Niagara branch of the Council of Canadians said: "I think he's going to be our mascot, don't you?"

Roger said the experience

"was awesome"

Although he said he was very nervous about speaking during the event, if it helps save the Welland hospital it was worth it.

"I really want to save our hospital," he said.

Referring to thousands of hospital bed closures during the past 20 years, Welland

MPP Cindy Forster asked: "Does this look like a progressive government to you, a government that is actually dismantling our health-care system and closing our beds?"

"Kathleen Wynne is here today," Forster said — and she wasn't referring to the huge effigy of the premier that was displayed during the event.

"Tell her, her government is not progressive. This reminds me of 1997-98 when we were walking down University Ave. under a Mike Harris government."

Sue Hotte from Niagara Health Coalition wasn't disappointed with the attendance from Niagara. She said a bus carried about 50 people from Welland, Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Thorold, St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake to the rally, but many more Niagara residents made their own way to the event.

Carrying a bright red sign with "Save Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital" written on it, Sandra O'Connor said opposition to the closure of that facility this spring "is building."

"We're just starting. We just went through an election. It's such a difficult time," she said. "I think people are confused. They think it's a done deal and they don't have any recourse, but we're going to show them that there is a recourse and they can speak up."

Hotte said the health coalition hopes building on the momentum of the rally in the months ahead, hoping to ultimately stop plans calling for privatization of hospital services and the closure of hospitals.

"We're just going to keep at it," Hotte said.

Contacted last Friday afternoon, Niagara Health System spokesman Brady Wood said local hospital administration chose to refrain from commenting on the rally.

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■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

Thinking about Downton Abbey church

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Jesus Christ established His church by dying as the sacrifice for sinners, being raised out of death, being set at the right hand of God and by filling all his people with the Holy Spirit.

This is the church. It is not a human invention and construct. It is the "Called Out People of God."

Unfortunately, there is a misconception that the church is like Downton Abbey, and, truthfully, we who are part of Christ's church can be guilty of portraying it, in this fashion, by how we live. I say misconception, because how we live, often, shows the opposite of what God intends his church to be. Read the letters of the Apostles in the New Testament and you will see what God expects and plans, for His church.

Downton Abbey as church can portray

a class system, a hierarchy of people, with some at the top and many at the bottom. God's church is to be a community without barriers and classes. All are to be equal in Christ with a diversity of gifts and roles. We are expected to live up to that characteristic.

Others see this church as a place where "irrelevant traditionalists" seek propriety, decorum and live with nostalgia for the past; trying to guard the "status quo" by holding off the advances of new thinking. We may do this, but contrary to popular opinion, the message of Jesus Christ is as relevant today as ever and His church is the bearer and practitioner of that Good News. The message cannot be changed, to suit the whims of others, because it is not our message to change. But, the way in which that wonderful message is presented must be adapted to the culture and age of the recipients.

Still, others see "members" of the Downton Abbey church trying to preserve a building at any cost, fixating on money and having all the people within bent on doing whatever it takes to keep the Abbey facilities from destruction and decay. Their reason for being, so it is thought, is to perpetuate the abbey for the next generation so that the next generation can preserve the abbey for the next generation. God's church, on the other hand, is a community of people being built up together into the likeness of Jesus, who are commanded to put most of their resources into sharing the life-changing message with others. They are to exist for God and others, not themselves. In it's simplest form, the church, Jesus died to establish, is people serving other people.

Finally, there are some who see the Downton Abbey church as a place full of hypocrites, all vying for power, gossiping

scheming, conflicting and struggling within a system that feeds all of this.

Yes, Jesus' Church is far from perfect. Yes, the church Jesus is building needs work. Yes, the people of God are not what they should be. That is the very reason Jesus said the following to his church, through his Apostle, Paul.

"Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together, with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all." (Ephesians 4:1-6 NLT)

SKIP GILLHAM

For QMI Agency Niagara

Despite the cold war, it was not unusual to see the "hammer and sickle" of the Russian fleet on the Great Lakes.

The Russians sent a variety of ships to the inland seas and many often loaded grain or manufactured goods.

The *Ignatiy Sergeyev* was built at Gdansk, Poland, in 1968. The 154.54-metre-long diesel powered freighter had five cargo holds and could carry 12,640 tonnes of cargo.

The ship came through the St. Lawrence Seaway for the first time in 1962. With the break up of the Soviet Union, this vessel moved to the Ukrainian Shipping Co.

The *Ignatiy Sergeyev* was arrested at Kakinada, India, on Nov. 12, 2000, following a collision with a local dredger. The owners were assessed a huge fine which they would, or could, not pay. As a result, the 32-year-old vessel was beached and abandoned. It was sold to local shipbreakers later in the year and dismantled.

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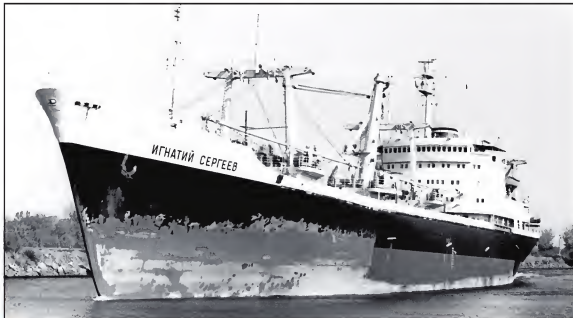


PHOTO: ROM BEAUPRE COLLECTION

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LOCAL NEWS

COMMUNITY

Cardboard house represents homelessness in Niagara

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

There are 5,868 families in Niagara on a waiting list for affordable housing.

In some cities, that wait can be up to 11 years.

To raise awareness of the dire need for affordable housing, Niagara Regional Housing and the YWCA set up an interactive display at the MacBain Community Centre last Friday.

The Cardboard House is a 24-foot by 16-foot structure that invites visitors to walk through four rooms to learn about the misconceptions, realities and solu-

tions to homelessness in Niagara.

In the last room, a statement on the wall reads "You Can Create Change Now," and the public was invited to leave positive and reflective messages of hope.

"The whole idea is to engage the public," said Wendy Thompson, community resource unit manager at Niagara Regional Housing, the administrator of affordable housing for the region.

"If we just put out brochures, no one would really take notice but this house

gets people talking about affordable housing and homelessness and it has been very effective."

She said many people are unaware of the fact that there is a lack of affordable housing options in Niagara.

The house was set up to mark National Housing Day which commemorates the 1998 declaration by the Big City Mayor's Caucus that homelessness in Canada had reached crisis proportions.

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MIKE DIBATTISTA/STAFF PHOTO

Niagara Regional Housing and the YWCA set up an interactive display at the MacBain Community Centre to raise awareness of the need for affordable housing. Wendy Thompson, community resource unit manager at Niagara Regional Housing, says the home is a good way for visitors to learn some of the misconceptions, realities and solutions to homelessness in Niagara.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **CRIME:** Initiative hopes to keep weapons out of criminals' hands

Niagara police holding gun amnesty

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

The Niagara Regional Police wants people to turn in unwanted firearms and ammunition with the goal of preventing guns from falling into the wrong hands.

The gun amnesty, the first of its kind by the local police service, started Wednesday and ends Sunday.

"Even if we get one gun surrendered, that's one gun off our streets and the initiative will be a success," said Det. Const. Mike Carr of the NRP's Provincial Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy unit.

Carr said weapons are often stolen during break and enters and used in the commission of a criminal offence.

"We want to collect fire-

arms and ammunition that could be the target of a break and enter," he said. "If we can take them out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them, it contributes to public safety."

Ammunition, handguns, rifles, air guns and replica guns will be accepted during the amnesty.

Police are asking residents

not to drop off guns or ammunition at a local police station, rather to call the PAVIS unit to schedule a pickup.

Most surrendered weapons and ammunition will be destroyed.

Firearms with historical significance will be sent to the Centre of Forensic Sciences to determine the appropriate disposition.

Any firearm that is found to have been involved in a crime, Carr said, will be held for further investigation.

The amnesty provides participants with limited immunity from certain possession and storage offences.

Police will also take any paperwork associated with the firearm being surrendered. The items will also be

picked up if there is no accompanying paperwork.

PAVIS is a provincially funded unit that focuses on reducing illegal gang, drug and weapons activities in Niagara by stressing intervention, prevention, enforcement and community participation.

For further information and to arrange a pickup, call 289-407-2634.

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■ **MEDICINE:** Doctors ask patients to bring lists of drugs they're taking

Meds matter when dealing with illness

RAY SPITERI
QMI Agency Niagara

Health officials are asking patients to play more of a role in their own safety.

Niagara Health System has launched a campaign to remind patients about the importance of bringing a list of their medications when visiting one of its sites, whether it's for a scheduled appointment or a visit to one of its emergency departments or urgent-care centres.

A recent review of patients visiting emergency departments in Welland, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines showed 30% of them brought their medication list to the hospital.

"Keeping an up-to-date list of medications for you provides important information for your health-care team, and

it improves patient safety," said Alicia Niven, the health system's regional medication safety pharmacist.

Niven, who was the lead person behind the Your Medications Matter initiative, said sometimes patients rush to an NHS site, depending on the urgency of their condition, without thinking about what questions they might be asked by health officials.

She said while doctors and nurses can obtain pertinent information without having to rely on patients, having a list ready can speed up the process.

"Having an accurate list of your medications and other key information is important," said Niven. "Tell us what you are taking and let us do the rest."

The health system has a print-friendly medication brochure on its

website — www.niagarahealth.on.ca/en/patient-and-visitor-information/bring — that allows patients to view their medication list, along with other vital information such as who prescribed the medication and how often it is taken.

"If someone has questions or needs help filling out the form, they are encouraged to review the information with their community pharmacist," said Niven. She said having a prepared list could also help patients going to new physicians or walk-in clinics.

In addition to the online brochure, Niven said the NHS is marketing the initiative at its sites and through a YouTube video.

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FORUUA

Niagara Health System has launched a campaign to remind patients about the importance of bringing a list of their medications when visiting one of its sites, whether it's for a scheduled appointment or a visit to one of its emergency departments or urgent-care centres.

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LOCAL NEWS

COMMUNITY

Holiday home tour supports outreach programs



This home on White Rd. is one of five properties on Port Colborne's Winter Celebration House Tour, which takes place Saturday, Nov. 29.

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Tired of decking your halls with boughs of holly? Homeowners looking for new holiday decorating trends and tips need look no further than Port Colborne's Winter Celebration House Tour.

The seventh annual event, hosted by the parish of St. James and St. Brendan Anglican Church, takes place Saturday and features five area homes dolled up for the season using both traditional and modern techniques.

"It's a great way for people to get ideas to decorate their own homes for the holidays," said Rev. Rob Hurkmans, who described the buildings on the tour as "quite spectacular."

There are a number of "hidden gems" in the community tour organizers are eager to put on display, he said, but participants will

have to wait until the day of the event for the locations to be unveiled.

The self-guided tour, which runs 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., begins at the Guild Hall, 72 Charlotte St., where maps of the route will be handed out.

At the hall, participants will be treated to tea, scones and jam, and a silent auction and bake sale will be set up.

The holiday tour is a major fundraiser for the outreach programs offered at the Guild Hall and The Hub.

Tickets are \$20 and are available in advance by calling the church office at 905-834-3184 or calling or visiting Something Else, 244 West St., 289-836-9893.

Tickets will also be available at the door.

For more information, visit www.wintercelebration.org.

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■ NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY: More personnel changes

Senior staffer no longer with NPCA

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

A senior staffer with Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority who earned more in 2013 than anyone else in the organization has been let go.

Board members of the NPCA received an e-mail Nov. 13 saying Mary Stack, a longtime employee, was no longer with the organization.

Contacted last Monday, NPCA chief administrative officer Carmen D'Angelo initially called it an "internal HR matter." After being asked for more detail, he confirmed the supervisor of marketing and community relations was gone.

"Mary Stack is no longer with the NPCA," he said.

Asked why, D'Angelo said "that's an internal HR matter. It's not for open public discussion."

Conservation authority board member Brian Baty, a regional councillor for Pelham, said he learned of Stack's departure on Nov. 13.

"There was no advanced discussion of this at the board level. There may have been in terms of with the chair or vice-chair, but not at the board level that I'm aware of," he said.

In March, Welland MPP Cindy Forster raised concerns at Queen's Park over the NPCA's actions after the agency allegedly fired one-fifth of its staff over the course of two years.

That included a major restructuring that, among other changes, saw Stack moved from director of communications to the position of supervisor of marketing and community relations. A communications specialist was also hired late in 2013.

As director of communications, Stack was paid \$100,361 in 2012, according to the Public Sector Salary Disclosure list. On the 2013 list, Stack was listed as supervisor of marketing and communications and was paid \$163,692, the highest amount of the four NPCA employees who made the list.

D'Angelo wouldn't comment on why Stack's salary was that high for 2013, saying only the NPCA's obligation to report salaries through the Public Sector Salary Disclosure list had been fulfilled.

Along with Stack, another staffer — Beth Best, co-ordinator of the NPCA's annual Niagara Children's Water Festival — was also let go this month, D'Angelo confirmed.

"Her contract was not renewed," he said.

D'Angelo wouldn't comment when asked if anyone else was let go.

"Those are internal HR matters that I can't discuss with you," he said. Messages left for both Stack and Best were not returned for this story.

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LOCAL NEWS

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■ **NUTRITION:** Breakfast program kick-starts the day for students

Getting the fuel to learn

ANNA LANGLEY

QMI Agency Niagara

Breakfast fuels the mind, but it can be a challenge finding the time to create a nutritious meal in the morning, says Welland celebrity chef Anna Olson.

"Breakfast sets our day," the Food Network Canada host said. "If we are fuelled, then we respond, learn, process and retain information more effectively."

In the rush to get out the door in the morning, it can be difficult to slot in time to eat.

To fill that gap, Niagara Nutrition Partners serves breakfast to more than 1,300 children at 208 schools and community programs across the region.

Last Thursday, Olson lent her celebrity status to raise awareness of the non-

profit agency and to discuss the importance of a well-balanced diet and healthy living.

She was at Richmond St. Public School in Thorold to share a healthy recipe with students.

"Engaging the students in the preparation of meals connects them to what they are eating and why," Olson said.

"If kids are a part of the preparation, their pride and involvement will give them the capacity to try new foods, and then they grow up to be knowledgeable cooks and diners themselves."

Studies show skipping breakfast interferes with cognition and learning, and effects are more pronounced in nutritionally at-risk children than in well-nourished children.

Established in 1998, Niagara Nutrition Partners

promotes the connection between healthy food choices and improved learning for children.

It facilitates healthy nutritious food programs at a variety of elementary and secondary schools in each of Niagara's 12 municipalities.

Working together with more than 400 volunteers and community partners including District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board, it is able to offer support to student nutrition programs through provincial grants and local fundraising efforts.

"We couldn't do this without the support of our community partners who step up to the plate with donations and other supports," said program manager Anne Kirkpatrick.

Olson has been involved

with the program for several years.

"I believe it's important that all students have access to healthy food, at breakfast particularly, and I like that Niagara Nutrition Partners accomplishes this equitably," Olson said.

"I commend (them) for what they can accomplish, especially considering that they are volunteer-driven ... a true credit to community involvement."

FirstOntario Credit Union recently came on board to assist with student nutrition programs in five regions, including Niagara.

"This is the value credit unions bring to communities," said Mary De Sousa, executive vice-president of marketing at FirstOntario Credit Union.

For further information about Niagara Nutrition Part-



JULIE JOCSAK/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Anna Olson, photographed at Niagara College on June 18, 2012.

meal at any time of the day, so through our financial donation and our volunteers, we hope to change that."

For further information about Niagara Nutrition Part-

ners or to donate or volunteer, visit www.NiagaraNutritionPartners.ca.

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LOCAL NEWS

HOLIDAY SHOPPING

Canuck spin on a Black Friday tradition

DON FRASER

QMI Agency Niagara

Joanne Ross remembers when Black Friday crossed the border into the Great White North.

It had always been an American retail sales blitz taking place the Friday after U.S. Thanksgiving.

In Canada, it only gained traction during the recession-navigated 2008 retail season.

As much as anything, it was also about survival in a highly competitive cross-border shopping landscape.

"Back in 2008, several of our major Canadian retailers started running the Friday deals," said Ross, general manager of the new Outlet Collection at Niagara in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is marking its first Black Friday.

"The whole notion was to try to discourage shoppers from leaving Canada."

By 2012, Black Friday in Canada was in full swing, she said. "And we're now looking at Black Friday as being pretty comparable to Boxing Day."

"Our retailers are able to provide some really good deals and customers embraced it," she said, adding the mall will open at 7 a.m. Friday.

"We're finding in our Van-hoeve Cambridge malls a lot of people are taking that Black Friday off (in Canada), as a vacation day," she said. "So the store traffic is really good."

Black Friday has stretched out to become at least a week-end event for many stores. It now continues to Cyber Monday, which offers deals intended to switch on the online holiday season shopper.

Meanwhile, the battle of the Niagara frontier outlet malls is now full scale, with the two biggest going head to head.

The \$200-million Outlet Collection, which opened earlier this year, has totally changed that landscape as Canada's largest outlet mall.

Just kilometers away, Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls, N.Y., has completed a \$71-million expansion and added 50 stores to its even larger campus.

Cross-border shoppers are "extremely important," said Fashion Outlets marketing manager Michael Powers. He spoke of the "value and variety that makes up our retail population" as being a reliable draw for Canadians.

Powers said despite the spread between the two currencies, "we still think those dollars will go just as far here, if not even further."

As for the Niagara-on-the-Lake mall, "we're always aware of what's happening in your neighbourhood," Powers said. "But we're looking to make the experience here the best it possibly can be and I think that will trump things."

"That our mall is an enclosed one helps us out this time of the year, especially with the

weather we've been having."

Making it somewhat easier for Canadian retailers close to the U.S. is a weaker loonie that's worth 89 cents American.

Pen Centre marketing director Rick Woodward said a lower dollar "will also discourage, to some extent, people going across the river to shop."

Woodward acknowledged the new Niagara competition, "but we've always had to deal with it, that's nothing new."

For the third year, the Pen is featuring a Black Friday sale that is actually a four-day event starting today.

"We wanted to grab those Niagara-area shoppers that might be predisposed to shop on Friday and get them to give us a chance a day early," he said.

"That's proved very successful, so we'll be opening our doors early on Thursday and Friday at 7 a.m."

Among other incentives are tote bags for the first 450 shoppers today and Friday, and a free app called "savvy saver" developed last year, through which stores can upload sales and specials.

"We've been marketing it extensively ... hoping shoppers will download it and discover some of the best deals over those four days," Woodward said.

Seaway Mall in Welland has also found its Black Friday-associated events are well-received.

"This has kind of trickled in," said mall social media and event co-ordinator Alicia

Rubino. "Two years ago, a couple of tenants had a promotion. Last year, a lot did and this year even more so."

"You saw the tenants jump on board."

Their incentives include an early 9 a.m. opening that Friday, and flyers handed out at the entrances highlighting retailers promotions.

Duane Gibson, co-owner of Gibbys Electronics Supermarket, said Black Friday is a big deal for his St. Catharines store. He said cross-border shopping is not a major concern.

"We are very competitive," Gibson said, adding U.S. manufacturers are now giving his shop Black Friday-level deals that have dramatically reduced the spread between Canadian and American pricing.



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■ MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Regional councillors generally 'well behaved,' integrity commish says

ROB HOULE
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Region councillors have
been generally "well behaved"

in the nine months he has been
integrity commissioner George

Rust-D'Eye says.

"If anything, there have been relatively few complaints," Rust-D'Eye said over the phone from his Brantford office. "Especially being an election year, which is when they are most prevalent."

"There were a number, as I remember, against one particular councillor."

The three most recent complaints dealt with by Rust-D'Eye, who is on a one-year contract until the end of January, involved Coun. Andy Petrowski of St. Catharines.

In a report to council in mid-September, Rust-D'Eye dismissed a complaint against Petrowski and Niagara Falls regional Coun. Selina Volpanti alleging they broke conflict of interest rules when Petrowski offered to fundraise sponsorship money for the region-organized Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference held in Niagara Falls in late May and Volpanti gave him a list of potential sponsors.

In the same report, Rust-D'Eye said it was not within his authority to deal with another complaint against Petrowski, filed by the same person, which alleged a breach of conflict of interest rules pertaining to Petrowski offering to raise money for a legal defence fund for the Township of Wainfleet in its battle against a wind-energy project. The complaint said because of this, Petrowski should not have taken part in any discussion at the region related to industrial wind turbines. In his report to council, Rust-D'Eye said he had decided to suspend, and not commence, an inquiry into that complaint "in view of the fact that the complaint alleges a breach of statute, which... I do not have jurisdiction to investigate."

In a report dated Oct. 18, but submitted to council Nov. 6, Rust-D'Eye dismissed another complaint levelled against Petrowski, this one alleging he acted improperly during a charity golf tournament on June 26.

The incident in question took place at the 16th tee when the complainant, an employee of a mental-health agency, approached Petrowski and his playing partners to hand out a package of five

tees, one of which was a different colour to symbolize, the complainant said, the one in five children who has a mental-health problem. The report says it is alleged Petrowski, "who has strongly-held opinions about the portrayal of the mentally ill, stated, in response to the complainant's proffering of the golf tees," that the one-in-five statement was sensationalism. "This led to an extended political rant," the complainant is quoted as saying in the report. He demanded responses from her. He was extremely belligerent, confrontational and threatening.

The report says Petrowski admitted he was "passionate" about his opinion, but not confrontational.

Rust-D'Eye dismissed the complaint, in part because it was brought to his attention five weeks after the incident, originally by the employer, not the employee, and because "I has not been established to my satisfaction that at the time of the incident Coun. Petrowski was acting in, or representing, his capacity as a regional councillor."

Rust-D'Eye said because the conversation between Petrowski and the complainant was not recorded and there were varying observations from witnesses and participants, he could not fall on the side of either the councillor or complainant.

In any case, Rust-D'Eye wrote, "I do not believe that the matter is of such a degree of importance to warrant further consideration by me or by regional council."

Rust-D'Eye said he has offered to hold an orientation session informing incoming councillors "to bring them up to date on the code of conduct and what's required of them as councillors."

Petrowski said Tuesday the complaints against him have been a "witch hunt."

"It's no surprise that I have been the number one political target of the same group behind the other two (earlier) 'citizen' complaints who wants to muzzle me from defending the taxpayers," Petrowski said.

"It's too inexcusable that my political enemies are wasting valuable tax dollars to plot their failed political attacks against me!"

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WEATHER

Don't fear — winter should not be as bad as last year

DON FRASER
QMI Agency Niagara

Last week's snow was a far too early blast of winter for most.

But take heart — it's looking like we could get a break from last winter's painful polar vortex.

For these parts, "the forecast model is showing southern Ontario with either a normal or a little milder than normal" winter, said Environment Canada senior climatologist Dave Phillips.

"And it will definitely be one heck of a lot milder than last winter."

And a doozie it was, said Phillips. By his calculations, last year's stretch from November to March was the frostiest in 67 years.

Last Monday, emergency services in Niagara reported few traffic crashes or collisions despite the first significant snowfall of the season.

It wasn't the same report two days later, when Niagara got the remnant of south Buffalo's two-metre wallop.

Police are warning motorists to change their driving habits.

"Slow down and drive for the weather conditions," said acting Niagara Regional Police Staff Sgt. Josie Hollingshead.

"Losing control in the snow is not an excuse for an accident, and changes will be laid."

Staff Sgt. Jan Idzenga of the Niagara detachment of the

NIAGARA
REGION WINTER
CONTROL

31 combined sanding/
salting and snow plow
vehicles
Total 2014 winter activity
budget is about \$9.3 million

Ontario Provincial Police said he noticed more vehicles with snow tires than usual this season.

"It's a good thing to see, and I think after the winter we had last year a lot of drivers have seen the light."

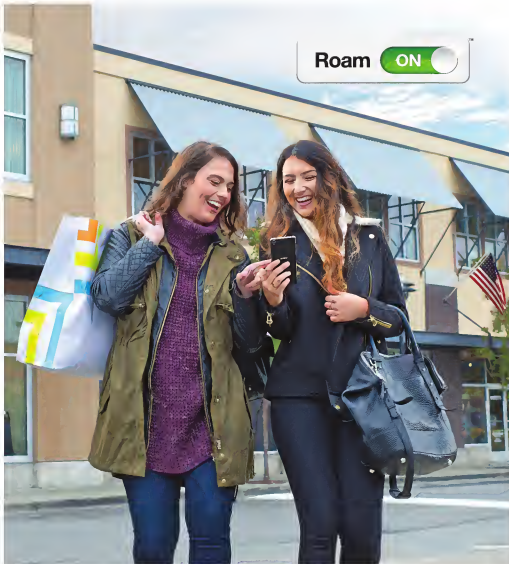
If you haven't done it already, now is the time to get cars prepared and winterized, he added.

That includes ensuring your vehicle has decent wipers, a ready supply of wiper fluid and ensuring your vehicle is mechanically fit.

"Keep the speed down," Idzenga said. "You can have the best-equipped car in the world ... (but if travelling too fast) and you're on ice, you're not stopping."

"That's why it was good to see drivers (last Monday) morning keeping their speeds down."

Idzenga's hope is to not have a repeat of last winter, with collisions in the area the most officers had seen in about five to six years.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ **COMMUNITY:** Brock experts say stopping it early makes a lifetime of difference

Bullying leaps from playground to office

DON FRASER
QMI Agency Niagara

For the bullied child, the abuse can start early and generate a lifetime of mental-health misery.

For the young bully, over time that aggression can become a never-ending wrecking ball.

That means bullying has to be quelled as early as possible, said Lisa Barrow,

assistant professor at Brock University's Goodman School of Business.

She has studied the way bullying continues disease-like into adulthood and infects a workplace.

"If these behaviours are not addressed at a younger age — from four years old to teenagers — then the bully begins to believe that behaviour is acceptable," said Barrow.

"As an adult, they become a manager ... or a leader, and they will tend to rely on that bullying as they interact with employees."

Meanwhile a child, targeted by bullies "may also grow up with a sense of resentment and a need to get back at someone for what they have experienced."

When in a position of authority, they might bully others to regain their own sense of lost power.

"With adult bullying, it's very subtle," she adds. "A manager is not going to punch you in the nose, or steal your lunch money."

"But they can embrace behaviours that devalue people."

That includes public humiliations, unfair promotion denials or yelling and

relentless teasing, "and they may try to instill the assistance of others."

Drew Dane, a psychology professor at the university, said the damage toll on young victims is clear as they get older. They can experience everything from self-esteem issues and anxiety disorders to depression and suicidal thoughts.

Bullies themselves can cause much worse work chaos — as they can graduate to anti-social actions, even serious crime.

"So it would be beneficial to address this as early as possible, and prevent the behaviours from occurring and the consequences that go along with it," said Dane, a clinical psychologist who specializes in bullying.

He said there are also different motivations and

incentives in bullying once adolescence hits.

Pre-adolescents might be focused on power, like controlling situations with their friends and snatching valued things like toys.

After puberty, issues arise with bullying focused around dating and sex opportunities.

"With that, the game changes a little bit," Dane said.

To that extent, male bullies can display physical strength and dominance they think would be attractive to prospective partners.

Female adolescents can use bullying for social things, like peer exclusion and rumour-spreading to damage the "reputation and relationships of rivals that might be competing for a

boyfriend."

Dane said he and colleagues also see bullying as a "cost-benefit analysis," where it can seem more beneficial for those who do it.

A key solution — and it has to start young — is to minimize any benefit and increase negative consequences a bully receives for their behaviour.

"You can have clear anti-bullying policies at schools ... parents can remain knowledgeable about their child's behaviour. And bullying is more likely to happen with peers, where it's reinforced or encouraged by peers," Dane said.

"All these things can be addressed early on."

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■ **POLICING:** OPP officer injured in freak crash recovering one step at a time

The 'long road back

BILL SAWCHUK
QMI Agency Niagara

Michelle Tucker keeps a goose feather close to her heart.

It's a reminder of how blessed she is to have her husband, Pete, by her side.

The veteran OPP officer from the Niagara detachment was injured in a freak crash on Hwy. 400 north of Barrie June 25. He was hit on the head by a goose in flight, causing him to crash his motorcycle while travelling at about 130 km/h.

Tucker, who is from St. Catharines, was part of an OPP escort at the time with at least 14 other motorcycles involved in a training exercise.

He stopped breathing and lost his left leg at the scene. In hospital over the next couple of weeks, he was in a coma and his kidneys failed. He endured six surgeries in a 10-day period.

Michelle Tucker keeps that goose feather in a locker

inscribed with the word Blessed.

Pete was on a breathing tube and ventilator, and when they were scoping it they pulled goose feathers out of his lungs," she said.

"It happened more than once. They told me about it, and I asked if I could have one. They looked at me like I was nuts, but a day or two later they brought me one.

"It's just a reminder. It's not about the goose at all. It represents his strength and that he has been able to overcome this."

Pete Tucker acknowledges all this — and in the next breath, counts those blessings.

"I don't want to be dramatic or have anyone thinking I am a special guy," he said. "A lot of my strength and determination comes from my wife, Michelle. We have been together 22 years now and married for 18 of them. She is the greatest,

strongest person I know, and I couldn't do it without her.

"I'm just a guy who survived an accident. I'm quite sure I could have died that day, but I made it because of faith and luck."

Tucker's luck started when he landed in the only area of the median that had grass.

The ground was soft. It rained the night before.

He was surrounded by members of the OPP's elite motorcycle unit, the Golden Helmets, who knew exactly what needed to be done to save his life until paramedics could get there. One of the officers just happened to have a tourniquet in his kit.

The hospital in Barrie was only about 10 kilometres away. A Toronto-based doctor from Sunnybrook hospital — which has the largest trauma unit in Canada — was visiting a doctor friend in Barrie and assisted in Tucker's emergency care.

The doctor contacted Sunnybrook and left staff know that they would be facing once Tucker arrived by air ambulance.

"People really stepped up, and it's been so wonderful in so many different ways," Michelle Tucker said.

"As horrible as this incident has been, I think it has brought out so many positive things in our lives that we had no idea about. We knew we were loved, but it is amazing to see the support from our church and our neighbours at home.

"People in our neighbourhood put together a meal train and take turns bringing food to the home. You expect that in the first few weeks or so, but we still have people bringing us meals at night. It's been wonderful, because I'm still working, and he's in therapy, but I said to the woman who is running it, I'm actually embarrassed this is still going on."

Tucker is mobile again with the aid of a walker and prosthetic leg. He has lost nearly 50 pounds but was at city hall Monday morning.

He received a plaque from Mayor Brian McMullan recognizing Tucker's service to the community and his courage and determination in recovering from his crash.

Tucker is a member of the elite OPP Golden Helmets precision motorcycle team and is trained in providing VIP escorts for heads of state and celebrities, including U.S. President Barack Obama and Queen Elizabeth.

Tucker said he isn't done with police work.

"I'm not depressed, but sometimes I get a little sad and there are some shadows. But I'm going to be OK," he said. "I really hope something good can come out of it."

"I want to work. The OPP has been very positive about

me coming back to work, but I don't want to go back and put in my time. I know I'll never be on the road again, but there are many things I can put my mind to."

He is undergoing near-daily physiotherapy. His right knee is still a mess. He has three torn ligaments that have to be repaired at some point.

"He's a determined fellow," said Staff Sgt. Ian Ikenaga of the Niagara OPP. "He doesn't want this to define who he is. He wants to be back at work, which is truly inspirational with what he has been through."

"I know he is really eager to get back and pushing himself to get there. There is no doubt he can contribute to the organization. He is a heck of an officer."

"There are lots of positions we will be able to fit him into when he's ready. I have no doubt he will find some meaningful work. He's that type of guy."

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Pharmacists

ZOSTAVAX: PREVENT SHINGLES

Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox (varicella-zoster virus). After the chickenpox blisters heal, the virus remains dormant in nerve cells in your body. It can become reactivated after many years resulting in shingles. It is not known exactly why the virus becomes reactivated, however it is thought that having a weakened immune system along with physical trauma, UV light or stress may play a role. The risk of developing shingles increases with age and people over 50 years old are at the greatest risk. The symptoms include a painful, blistering rash that often breaks out in one part of the body, usually the chest or upper back are involved. Sometimes the pain resulting from shingles can last for weeks, months, or rarely years, after the rash heals. This lasting pain has been described as burning, aching, throbbing or stabbing and can result from something as little as a breeze or the touch of clothing on the skin. Older people are again at greater risk. Shingles may also result in skin infections at the site of the rash or scarring following healing of the rash.

Fortunately, a vaccine is now available to boost your immune system and help to prevent shingles and its complications. It is called Zostavax and is available to adults over 50 years old. The vaccine cannot be used if you are already experiencing symptoms of shingles; it is only used for prevention. This vaccine was found to reduce the risk of developing shingles by about 50-70% (depending on your age) within the first year after receiving the vaccine.

Zostavax is safe for most people, however it should not be used by anyone who:

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- IS PREGNANT
- HAS A WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEM (E.G., DUE TO CANCER, HIV/AIDS, PROBLEMS WITH BONE MARROW, OR OTHER IMMUNE SYSTEM PROBLEMS)
- HAS ACTIVE UNTREATED TUBERCULOSIS
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IN BRIEF

Thorold has new fire chief

Michael Seth will join Thorold's fire and community emergency management coordinator with the Six Nations elected council in Ohsweken. Previously, he spent six years as ambulance services manager with Six Nations. He graduated in the spring with a bachelor of applied business: emergency services, from Lakeland College in Alberta, and is now pursuing a master of communications management degree at McMaster University. Halliday concludes a career spanning nearly 43 years

Seth has spent the past 10 years as fire chief and community emergency management coordinator with the Six Nations elected council in Ohsweken. Previously, he spent six years as ambulance services manager with Six Nations. He graduated in the spring with a bachelor of applied business: emergency services, from Lakeland College in Alberta, and is now pursuing a master of communications management degree at McMaster University. Halliday concludes a career spanning nearly 43 years

He graduated in the spring with a bachelor of applied business: emergency services, from Lakeland College in Alberta, and is now pursuing a master of communications management degree at McMaster University. Halliday concludes a career spanning nearly 43 years

in firefighting that includes service in the Canadian Navy. He also served in several community firefighting roles, including chief in Grimsby prior to being named Thorold chief in 2010.

There will be a career celebration for Halliday at Club Capri on Dec. 21 from noon to 4 p.m. Contact Wendy Luce at Thorold city hall for information and tickets.

Festive RIDE program has started

The OPP will be out in force during the holiday season to prevent impaired

driving.

The Festive RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) campaign began Monday and will run until Jan. 2.

"The OPP goal is to get through the holiday season without losing a single life to impaired driving," said OPP Commissioner Vince Hawkes. "We will use a combination of public education and focused enforcement to drive home the message that impaired driving on Ontario roads is never acceptable."

The OPP is also reminding the public that driving while impaired by drugs other than

alcohol is equally dangerous and against the law. Over the first nine months of this year, 5,685 impaired charges have been laid across Ontario by the OPP. That's down 17% from the same period in 2013, which saw 6,842 impaired charges laid. However, for the same period there was a 32% increase in 2014 in the number of drug-impaired driving occurrences compared to 2013.

Niagara Newcomer bursary established

Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre has established a Niagara

Newcomer bursary for students going to post-secondary schools.

Five \$1,000 scholarships are available for newcomer youths planning to attend colleges or universities in and around Niagara.

The goal is to help young newcomers achieve their career goals, reward volunteerism, encourage youths to stay in Niagara and promote awareness of the centre to the broader Niagara community.

Nearly half of recent immigrant families are low-income, according to 2001 census data.

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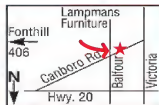
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■ **MUSIC:** Christmas with the First Lady of Guitar

Holidays bring Liona Boyd to Niagara

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

For an artist who makes such serene music, Liona Boyd's life has been anything but calm.

Constant moving. A career-threatening condition. Choosing between a husband or her music. There was also that eight-year relationship with former prime minister Pierre Trudeau. Being Canada's First Lady of the Guitar comes with some drama.

On the line from Toronto, the 65-year-old performer, says the ride has been bumpy but she'd like at times, but returning to Canada after married life in California has rejuvenated her.

"Basically, I was thinking that I would live forever happily in Beverly Hills with my wonderful husband, but he was kind of jealous of the guitar," she says. "He wanted me to give up the guitar and I just didn't want to."

"I had a lot of music in me, a lot more to give. I've done four records since I left, so it's really good that I did. Sometimes one chapter closes and another opens."

Since moving back to Toronto in 2011, Boyd has resumed her intimate concerts throughout Canada, including this Friday at Silver Spire United Church in St. Catharines. The venues may be smaller than during the height of her popularity in the 1980s and early 1990s, but Boyd says she savours every moment — "I pinch myself every time I get on stage."

Mainly because it was all nearly taken away in 2003.

Unable to control one finger in her right hand, Boyd was diagnosed with Musician's Focal Dystonia, in which muscles contract from repetition. She was told it was irreversible, and Boyd figured her career was over. But as she examined the way she played, she realized it was an ailment born of bad habits. Musical virtuosity, she discovered, will absorb both the good and bad to perform.

"In my case, I practised more and more, reinforcing the bad motion," she says. "Now there's all this research and knowledge, and hopefully a lot of musicians can prevent getting this."

Boyd didn't perform for six years.



LIONA BOYD

IF YOU GO

WHO: Liona Boyd

WHERE: Silver Spire United Church, 366 St. Paul St., St. Catharines

WHEN: Friday, 7 p.m.

TICKETS: \$30 adults, \$25 students/children. www.ticketweb.ca

When she returned, she had adopted a whole new style.

"I realized I could retrain. The brain is very plastic and trainable. If you spend the time, the neuro receptors regenerate in a different way."

A Liona Boyd concert is now much different than one 20 years ago — less concertos, more diversity, and certainly more singing, as heard on her newest album, *A Winter Fantasy*.

"I never had faith that I could sing," she says. "I was the kid that used to lip sync *Happy Birthday*."

It's her third Christmas album, returning to the genre that earned her a legion of fans with her classic 1981 album, *A Guitar for Christmas*. Her label at the time had such little faith in it, she paid half the budget to make it.

"But I went platinum," she says. "People still come up after concerts with the old LP and want me to sign it."

A Winter Fantasy combines traditional Christmas melodies with her own compositions, making for Boyd's most spiritual work yet. She was thrilled when a fan described it as "transcendent" after one show.

Christmas is special in other ways for the Boyd — It prompted her to first start performing as a young girl in London, England.

"My very early concerts were me playing the recorder and melodica, going Christmas carolling around the neighbourhoods in both England and Canada," she says. "I would fundraise for the humane society."

Her concerts have been downsized in another way: The ticket price.

"I specifically asked the promoter on this tour to make the tickets really low," she says. "I know at Christmas time people get a bit stretched, I know St. Catharines is not the most prosperous right now."

"One thing that changed my life was going to a concert when I was 13, so I really encourage parents to bring their kids. One concert can change their life."

john.law@sunmedia.ca

LOCAL NEWS

■ **MUSIC:** Singer keeps promise to her late son

Carrey croons for Niagara talent showcase

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

She has been through poverty and tragedy, but when you're Jim Carrey's sister, there's also lots of comedy.

Niagara singer Rita Carrey shares her story in the upcoming book *Growing Up Carrey*, and she's giving snippets of it on-stage. Tonight she brings her new one-woman show to The Kasbah in Niagara Falls as part of a talent showcase series benefitting local charities.

"I'm gonna do some jazz songs, big band era songs, pop songs, but I'll tell you why I'm doing that based on things that happened in my life," says Carrey, who just released her first Christmas album, *Around Each Christmas Tree*.

Started by local musician Wayne Malton, the showcase series will spotlight different Niagara talent each week. Admission is free, but tonight's show will accept donations for Dreams Take Flight, a charity which enables physically, socially and mentally challenged children to have the trip of a lifetime. It was started by Air Canada employees in 1989.

Carrey will be joined by local artists Paige Kopp, Doug Llewellyn, Emily Yochim, Sarah Boulton and Steve Kostyk.

Carrey has been active in Niagara's music scene for years, but has recently taken her show to Toronto where it went over "great."

The connection to her famous brother is what captures attention, but audiences are often surprised at what she delivers on stage.

"You've got to get over that and go with the flow," says the of her superstar sibling and people's assumptions. "They judge (me) because of him both positively and negatively."

"But I don't care. I'm doing what makes me happy, what I enjoy doing, and people seem to like it."

Carrey was an on-air personality at Welland radio station 91.7 Giant FM for 10 years before being let go in 2012. She's now general manager for the Christmas in Niagara Falls store at Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort.

Growing up a Carrey wasn't what people expect, she says. Before her brother became a star on *In Living Color* in the early '90s, the Newmarket-based Carrey family went through years of poverty and

hardships. After her father lost his job, the family was forced to live in a van.

"When (Jim) was younger, he was just one of us," she says. "(We) worked in a factory, altogether, not finishing high school because we worked all night long."

"Most people think, 'Oh, I could never get into entertainment because I don't know anybody' either in music, arts or whatever. Well, Jim didn't know anybody either. He had to find a way to make it happen."

His sister chose a different path after having kids, but when her oldest son Marty died in an auto accident in 2005, she decided to follow some advice he gave her when he was four years old.

"He said, 'Mom, you should



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Niagara's Rita Carrey, sister of Jim Carrey, helps launch a new talent showcase at The Kasbah in Niagara Falls Nov. 27.

sing for a living.' I said, 'When you can play guitar, I'll sing.' Then he booked us into a club when he was 18 so I had

to make that promise come true."

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